DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 234 311 CG 016 905

AUTHOR Keller, John W.; Piotrowski, Chris
TITLE Psychological Testing: Trends in Masters Level Counseling Training Programs.
PUB DATE Mar 83
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association (29th, Atlanta, GA, March 23-26, 1983). For related document, see CG 016 906.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Counselor Educators; Counselors; *Counselor Training; Diagnostic Tests; Higher Education; *Masters Programs; *Personality Assessment; Personality Measures; *Projective Measures; *Psychological Testing; Surveys

ABSTRACT

Masters level counseling graduates often provide clinical services in applied settings. To investigate the status of psychodiagnostic testing in masters level counseling (terminal) programs in the United States, all 48 masters level counseling training programs (excluding those with doctoral level training) received a one page questionnaire. Thirty-two questionnaires were returned, for a 67 percent response rate. Results showed that 69 percent of the programs were eclectic in orientation and 22 percent had a humanistic orientation; other theoretical orientations were minimally represented. Projective personality testing was not considered a crucial skill at the masters level. However, one-third of the respondents deemed objective personality assessment and intelligence testing required areas. While 38 percent indicated an increase in objective personality assessment, only 9 percent envisioned an increase in projective techniques. Counselor educators evidenced little faith in the methodological soundness of projective techniques, and favored objective approaches with research credibility. (MCF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED234311

Psychological Testing: Trends in Masters Level Counseling Training Programs

John W. Keller

and

Chris Piotrowski

John W. Keller and Chris Piotrowski

Psychology Department, University of West Florida

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Chris Piotrowski

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Running head: Psychological Testing

CG 016905

Abstract

Attitudes toward the status of psychological testing in masters level (terminal) counseling training programs were investigated. A short questionnaire was sent to the coordinator of each program. Of the 48 programs 32 responded for a response rate of 67 percent. The results indicated that projective techniques were not considered important in counselor preparation. However, objective personality assessment was emphasized and seen as increasing in importance. Intelligence and vocational testing were also seen as being quite popular. The utility of objective measures was considered warranted based on research credibility, while projectives received little support. Futhermore, training in psychodiagnostics was considered part of counselor preparation and the implications of the survey findings were discussed.

Abstract

Current trends in psychological testing in masters level (terminal) counseling training programs indicated an emphasis on objective approaches only, including IQ and vocational measures.

Psychological Testing: Trends in Masters Level Counseling Training Programs

Over the past two decades, several surveys (Lubin, Wallis & Paine, 1971; Brown & McGuire, 1976; Piotrowski & Keller, 1978; Sundberg, 1961) investigating 'test usage' in applied clinical settings have indicated that psychodiagnostic assessment is an expected function of the professional psychologist. On the other hand, several studies (Shemberg & Kelley, 1970; Thelen & Ewing, 1970; Thelen, Varble, & Johnson, 1968) have suggested a deemphasis on psychodiagnostics in the academic setting while other investigations have found support for diagnostic training (Korchin & Schuldberg, 1981; Levy & Fox, 1975; Piotrowski & Keller, Note 1). However, the data from the academic setting were based on doctoral clinical programs.

It has been noted that half of all psychologists who work in mental health facilities lack the Doctorate degree (Occupational Outlook Handbook). Since masters level counseling graduates often provide clinical services in applied settings, it would be of interest to learn the importance of psychological testing in masters level counseling training. Research data on this topic is rather sparse. An extensive study (Wantz, Scherman & Hollis, 1982) on counselor preparation found 34 percent of the surveyed programs with curriculum emphasis in "tests, measurements, research and statistics." However, the investigation included doctoral level programs. The purpose of the present survey was to investigate the status of psychodiagnostic testing in masters level counseling (terminal) programs in the U.S.

Method

All (N = 48) masters level (terminal) counseling training programs in the U.S. were included (Graduate Study in Psychology 1982-83 Catalog). Programs that included doctoral level training were excluded so as not to confuse the assessment of masters level training. A cover letter with the one-page questionnaire was forwarded to the coordinator of the counseling program in late August 1982. A follow-up inquiry was made one month later to those programs which failed to respond. Of the 48 programs 32 returned the questionnaire for a 67 percent rate of response. Several of the questions approximate those posed by Piotrowski and Keller (Note 1) and Thelen et al., (1968).

Results

Data from all respondents were usable. Thus, percentages were calculated based on a total of 32. Below are the survey questions and results.

1. Orientation of the Masters counseling program. eclectic (69%); humanistic (22%); behavioral (6%); psychodynamic (3%).

2. (a) Number of courses, if any, required in projective personality assessment. 0 = 63%; ½ = 9%; 1 = 9%; 2 = 6%.

   (b) Number of courses, if any, required in objective personality assessment. 0 = 38%; ½ = 6%; 1 = 34%; 2 = 6%.

   (c) Number of courses, if any, required in individual intelligence assessment. 0 = 60%; ½ = 0%; 1 = 38%; 2 = 3%.

   (d) Number of courses, if any, required in vocational assessment. 0 = 39%; ½ = 3%; 1 = 25%; 2 = 3%. (Note: 4 respondents indicated 1 course required covering assessment in general).

3. (a) Do you see projective personality assessment--increasing (9%), remaining the same (44%), decreasing (34%) in the academic setting in the near future.

   (b) Do you see objective personality assessment--increasing (38%), remaining the same (56%), decreasing (0%) in the academic setting in the near future.

   (c) Do you see individual intelligence assessment--increasing (28%), remaining the same (36%), decreasing (3%) in the academic setting in the near future.

   (d) Do you see vocational assessment--increasing (66%), remaining the same (25%), decreasing (0%) in the academic setting in the near future.

4. In your opinion, with what five projective tests, if any, should the counseling Masters candidate be familiar. (percent indicates test as one of five mentioned), Thematic Apperception Test (69%); Rorschach (53%); House-Tree-Person (25%); Human Figure Drawings (22%); Sentence Completion (22%); Bender-Gestalt Test (22%).

5. In your opinion, with what five objective personality measures, if any, should the counseling Masters candidate be familiar. (percent indicates test as one of five mentioned), Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (81%); California Psychological Inventory (66%); 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (38%); Edwards Personality Preference Schedule (31%); Strong Vocational Interest Blank (19%); Personal Orientation Inventory (13%), Myer-Briggs Type Indicator (9%); responses for all other measures were negligible.

6. In performing an assessment of personality, would you include individual intelligence tests as part of the battery. yes (50%); sometimes (47%); no (3%).

7. (a) Based on research findings, do you feel that the extent of projective test usage in various applied clinical settings is warranted. yes (28%); somewhat (34%); no (31%).

   (b) Based on research findings, do you feel that the extent of objective personality test usage in various applied clinical settings is warranted. yes (53%); somewhat (41%); no (3%).

A preliminary question asked respondents to indicate the number of hours needed to complete the master's program. The mean was 43 semester hours for the 32 programs with a range of 30-60 hours. Apparently, the survey included two-year counseling programs, which might have more flexibility incorporating various psychological testing courses.

Item 1 indicated that 69 percent of the programs which responded were eclectic in orientation. Eclecticism both shows faculty diversity and reflects the increase in specialization which has occurred in the counselor education field (Wantz et al., 1982). A humanistic orientation was expoused by 22 percent of the respondents and probably indicated the influence of the person centered/ existential approach in counseling psychology; other theoretical orientations were minimally represented (Smith, 1982).

Item 2 ascertained the number of required courses in the projective, objective, IQ, and vocational areas. Projective personality testing was not considered a crucial assessment skill for the master's level counselor. On the other hand, objective personality assessment and individual IQ testing were deemed required areas of expertise by approximately one-third of the respondents. Required coursework in vocational testing was considered important

by 25 percent of the respondents. Perhaps this trend reflects the growing emphasis in the vocational guidance, and career and life planning areas (Wantz, et al., 1982).

Item 3 was intended to obtain the direction of the future emphasis in the projective, objective, IQ, and vocational assessment areas. While 38 percent of the respondents indicated an increase in objective personality assessment, only 9 percent envisioned an increase for projective techniques. At the same time 34 percent of the respondents felt that projectives were decreasing in emphasis while none of the respondents felt similarly about objective assessment. This trend (Items 2 & 3) of an increase in emphasis on objective personality measures has been supported in surveys of doctoral level clinical psychology programs (Piotrowski & Keller, Note 1; Thelen et al., 1968). Intelligence testing seemed to get an affirmative mandate with 63 percent of the respondents indicating support of its current usefulness. Interestingly, the future of vocational assessment was given much support, with 66 percent of the respondents indicating an increase in emphasis in the career planning area.

Items 4 and 5 dealt with the familiarity with which masters level counselors should have with projective and objective personality measures. Over half of the respondents suggested familiarity with the TAT and Rorschach. Projective drawings, Sentence Completion Tests, and the Bender-Gestalt were also moderately mentioned. Of the objective measures the MMPI and CPI were most frequently mentioned. The 16 PF, EPPS, SVIB, and Myer-Briggs were also alluded to with moderate interest.

The preference for including IQ tests as part of the assessment of an individual's personality was indicated by Item 6. Only 3 percent of the respondents rejected the idea of including IQ test data in an assessment battery. This finding confirms the interest in the use of the intelligence test protocol in personality assessment (Blatt & Allison, 1981). Item 7 dealt with the research credibility of projective and objective measures. While 31 percent of the respondents felt negative toward projectives, only 3 percent felt negative toward objective personality measures. Moreover, this finding supported the notion that projective techniques may be worthwhile teaching and clinical tools, but are strongly rejected as credible research instruments (Ritzler & Del Gaudio, 1976).

Conclusions

The present survey results yielded a rather paradoxical picture of the status of psychological testing in sub-doctoral counseling programs. While a majority of respondents felt that masters graduates should be familiar with projective techniques such as the Rorschach and TAT, only 15 percent of the respondents advocated projective personality assessment as part of the required curriculum. Perhaps, academicians are aware of the focus on assessment skills, including psychological testing, in applied settings (Piotrowski & Keller, 1978). On the other hand, counseling faculty members possibly deemphasize instruction on psychodiagnostics, especially projectives, due to an already overcrowded curriculum. The decision not to teach psychodiagnostics may be related to the faculty member's lack of opportunity in psychological testing with actual clients and thereby limiting their experience in teaching a course on personality assessment. A recent study (Wantz et al., 1982) indicated trends in graduate training in marriage and family therapy, consultation, geriatrics counseling,

career planning, substance abuse and women's issues. Perhaps, with emphasis in these expanding specialty areas, psychological testing is regarded as not essential. However, some counseling programs stress assessment instruments such as the 16 PF, EPPS, POI which deal with "adjust problems" as opposed to measures which tap major psychopathological conditions.

The recent trend in psychological testing favoring objective assessment is gaining momentum. Respondents strongly felt that objective personality assessment is an expected skill and that objective approaches were increasing in emphasis. This corroborates prior research (Piotrowski & Keller, Note I; Thelen et al., 1968).

Individual intelligence assessment was deemed a necessary skill of the counselor, and this popularity was seen as continuing in the near future. Possibly, assessment of IQ is considered crucial to the assessment of personality and also emphasized as part of a battery of tests given prospective clients. From another perspective the reason for the popularity of IQ testing may not be that counselors administer an unusual number of IQ tests but that they function as consultants to professionals (e.g. school psychologists). Taking a course in individual intelligence testing still represents the most effective method of understanding the meaning of Wechsler subtests and Stanford-Binet mental ages .

The emphasis on vocational testing was surprisingly quite affirmative, and probably reflects the current concerns that counselors have with vocational and employment guidance, and career and life planning strategies. The increased emphasis in the vocational area will likely augment an increased need for the counselor to administer and interpret test data. As counselors guide individuals toward career decisions, they could use vocational test results

to determine the individual's strengths as well as determine the potential for success in a particular career. This emphasis will probably continue in the forseeable future.

Apparently. counselor educators have little faith with the methodological soundness of projective techniques while concomitantly favoring objective approaches with research credibility. This contention has been recently supported in the psychological testing literature (Cleveland, 1976; Goldfried & Kent, 1972; Ivnik, 1977; Lewandowski & Saccuzzo, 1976).

The importance of training in psychological assessment has been evident in doctoral level training; this emphasis is also apparent in masters level counselor training to a degree. Objective personality, IQ, and vocational approaches seem to be on the forefront, while projective assessment is deemed unnecessary. Contrary to current thinking, psychological testing is alive and well. Counselor educators and students should be aware of the importance of psychological testing skills, for it is considered part of their educational preparation and professional role.

Reference Note

1. Piotrowski, C. & Keller, J. W. Psychodiagnostic testing in APA-approved clinical psychology programs. Paper presented at the meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association, Atlanta, March 1983.

References

Blatt, S. J. & Allison, J. The intelligence test in personality assessment. In A. I. Rabin (Ed.), Assessment with projective techniques: A concise introduction. New York: Springer, 1981.

Brown, W. R., & McGuire, J. M. Current psychological assessment practices. Professional Psychology, 1976, 7, 475-484.

Cleveland, S. E. Reflections on the rise and fall of psychodiagnosis. Professional Psychology, 1976, 7, 309-318.

Goldfried, M. R., & Kent, R. N. Traditional vs. behavioral personality assessment: A comparison of methodological and theoretical assumptions. Psychological Bulletin, 1972, 77, 409-420.

Ivnik, R. J. Uncertain status of psychological tests in clinical psychology. Professional Psychology, 1977, 8, 206-213.

Korchin, S. J., & Schuldberg, D. The future of clinical assessment. American Psychologist, 1981, 36, 1147-1158.

Levy, M. R., & Fox, H. M. Psychological testing is alive and well. Professional Psychology, 1975, 6, 420-424.

Lewandowski, D. G., & Saccuzzo, D. P. The decline of psychological testing. Professional Psychology, 1976, 7, 177-184.

Lubin, B., Wallis, R. R., & Paine, C. Patterns of psychological test usage in the United States: 1935-1969. Professional Psychology, 1971, 2, 70-74.

Piotrowski, C. & Keller, J. W. Psychological test usage in Southeastern outpatient mental health facilities in 1975. Professional Psychology, 1978, 9, 63-67.

Ritzler, B. A. & Del Gaudio, A. C. A survey of Rorschach teaching in APA-approved clinical graduate programs. Journal of Personality Assessment, 1976, 40, 451-453.

Shemberg, K., & Kelley, S. Psychodiagnostic training in the academic setting: Past and present. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1970, 34, 205-211.

Smith, D. Trends in counseling and psychotherapy. American Psychologist, 1982, 37, 802-809.

Sundberg, N. D. The practice of psychological testing in clinical services in the United States. American Psychologist, 1961, 16, 79-83.

Thelen, M. H., & Ewing, D. R. Roles, functions, and training in clinical psychology: A survey of academic clinicians. American Psychologist, 1970, 25, 550-554.

Thelen, M. H., Varble, D. L., & Johnson, J. Attitudes of academic clinical psychologists toward projective techniques. American Psychologist, 1968, 23, 517-521.

Wantz, R. A., Scherman, A., & Hollis, J. W. Trends in counselor preparation: Courses, program emphases, philosophical orientation, and experimental components. Counselor Education and Supervision, 1982, 21, 258-268.

Footnotes

John W. Keller is an Associate Professor, and Chris Piotrowski a Research Associate, Psychology Department, University of West Florida. This paper was presented at the meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association, Atlanta, March 1983.